PART 2006 - MANAGEMENT

Subpart FF - Management Oversight of the Information Resources
        Management (IRM) Program

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Subpart FF - Management Oversight of the Information Resources
        Management (IRM) Program

§2006.1551 Purpose.

        This Instruction assigns responsibilities for management
oversight of the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations and Management, Rural Economic and
Community Development (RECD) Information Resources Management (IRM) programs and
designates members of the Automation Review Council (ARC) and assigns their responsibilities
and functions.

§2006.1552 Definitions.

        Application Information System (AIS). A collection of software, procedures, and
        equipment that is designed, built, operated, and maintained to collect, record, process,
        store, retrieve, and display information which serves and is serviced by functional users and
        technical personnel.

        AIS life cycle. The time span between establishing a need for a system and the end of its
        operational use. The life cycle is divided into discrete, or separate, phases with formal
        milestones used as points for management control.

        Deputy Administrator, Operations and Management. The Deputy Administrator,
        Operations and Management, unless otherwise specified in this Instruction, refers to the
        Deputy Administrator, Operations and Management for the Deputy Under Secretary for
        Operations and Management, RECD.

        Information resource. All resources related to the management of information, including
        personnel, facilities, equipment, funds, and information technology.

        Information Resources Management (IRM). The planning, budgeting, organizing,
        directing, training, promoting, controlling, and managing activities associated with the
        burden, collection, creation, use, and dissemination of information by RECD, and includes
        the management of information and related resources, such as personnel, funds, and
        information technology.

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Information technology The hardware and software used in connection with information processing, regardless of the technology involved, whether computers, telecommunications, micrographics, office automation, or others.

IRM activity. A task that an organization is accomplishing or plans to accomplish that is related to the IRM program. IRM activities include, but are not limited to, AIS life cycle management, strategic IRM planning, data administration, reports, records, forms management, information collection and dissemination, and the application and use of information technology.

§2006.1553 Authority.

(a) Public Law 96-511 "The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980," as amended by the Paperwork Reduction Reauthorization Act of 1986 requires Federal agencies to carry out information management activities in an efficient, effective, and economical manner and to periodically review its IRM activities. A formal top-level management oversight process is essential to accomplish this requirement.

(b) OMB Circular A-130 "Management of Federal Information Resources," requires Federal agencies to develop internal policies and procedures and oversee, evaluate, and otherwise periodically review agency IRM activities. It also requires Federal agencies to establish systems of management control that document the requirements that each major AIS is intended to serve and provide for periodic review of those requirements over the life of the system in order to determine whether the requirements continue to exist and the system continues to meet the purposes for which it was developed.

(c) Departmental Regulation 3100-2 "Agency Information Resources Management Review Board," requires United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies to establish an IRM review board to assure that information management activities reflect the goals and priorities of agency programs, provide policy direction for IRM activities, and review and approve specific IRM actions.

(d) Departmental Regulation 3150-2 "IRM Review Program," requires USDA agencies to conduct reviews of itsAISs and IRM activities in order to improve program delivery service and to help improve the IRM program. USDA agencies are also required to develop a 3-year schedule of planned IRM reviews.

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§2006.1554 <u>Background</u>

(a) AISs serve a wide variety of users and are playing an increasingly important role in support of housing and rural development programs. Many RECD management information and day-to-day operating processes are automated and dependent on the availability of adequate information resources. Program and administrative managers have continuing requests for new AISs and enhancements to existing AISs. The reliance on computers and automation, combined with demands for information resources that frequently outstrip available resources, calls for top-level management involvement in the oversight of the IRM program.

(b) Because of increasing demands for information resources, stronger management controls were instituted in January 1992 to ensure that proposed automation initiatives were cost-effective, well planned, and consistent with strategic business goals and objectives. To assist with the management of automation issues and to resolve resource contention problems, the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) Administrator established the ARC. The ARC was chartered on January 30, 1992, and was initially composed of senior representatives from FmHA program and administrative management offices and a State Director. The ARC membership has been expanded periodically to accommodate Agency mergers into FmHA and to accommodate the USDA Reorganization. The Under Secretary, RECD establishes, via memorandum, the ARC voting membership by title.

§2006.1555 <u>Statement of policy</u>.

It is the policy of RECD to provide top-level management oversight and direction of the IRM program to ensure that automation initiatives support strategic business goals, objectives, and priorities that are consistent with IRM plans, standards, and guidelines; and that feasible alternatives are considered and follow sound life cycle management practices.

§2006.1556 <u>Applicability</u>

This policy applies to all RECD organizational elements.

§§2006.1557 - 2006.1565 [Reserved]

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§2006.1566 <u>Management oversight objectives</u> The objectives of management oversight of the IRM program are to:

(a) Ensure that IRM program goals and objectives are consistent with and support strategic program business goals and objectives.

(b) Involve top-level management in the approval and prioritization of automation initiatives, and the future direction of the IRM program.

 (c) Educate top-level management on the capabilities and limitations of initiatives and use of information technology.

(d) Ensure that automation initiatives follow sound life cycle management principles and practices.

(e) Identify and resolve issues and problems (such as staffing, funding, and planning) early in the life cycle of an IRM activity.

 (f) Use regular reviews of IRM activities, and the results of these reviews to identify opportunities for improvement, to reduce costs, to increase the usefulness of information, and, in general, to further RECD mission goals and objectives.

§2006.1567 <u>Responsibilities</u>

(a) <u>Automation Review Council (ARC)</u> The ARC provides top-level management oversight and direction to the IRM program and decides or makes recommendations to the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations and Management, RECD regarding automation initiatives for approval.

(1) The ARC will recommend and the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations and Management, RECD will approve the following:

(i) Major RECD IRM plans, such as Information Strategy Plans, Strategic IRM Plans, Information System Security Plans, and Data Administration Plans.

(ii) Funding levels for the Information Technology Budget.

(iii) IRM policies.

(iv) AIS purchases of equipment, software, or services that exceed $200,000 (life cycle) in purchase or contract costs. (AIS initiatives of lesser value may be designated as special interest and also reviewed by the ARC.) However, the Deputy Administrator, Operations and Management has authority to review and approve automation initiatives (purchases of equipment, software, or services) up to $200,000 (per initiative per fiscal year not to exceed $500,000 per initiative) in purchases or contract costs. See paragraph (c)(2) of this section.

(v) Designated standard AISs under development or in operation at each life cycle management milestone ensuring that sound life cycle management principles and practices are being followed. The review will determine whether the AIS should proceed to the next life cycle management phase.

(2) The ARC will:

(i) Approve the allocation of information resources consistent with the Agencies' strategic business goals and objectives.

(ii) Resolve conflicts among automation initiatives competing for existing information resources.

(iii) Establish, terminate when necessary, and provide guidance to the System Review Boards (SRBs) in prioritizing Requests For Automation (RFAs) and in developing annual workplans.

(b) <u>System Review Board (SRB.)</u> An SRB is established by the ARC for each designated AIS or group of related AISs. Voting SRB membership will be established by the ARC at the creation of the SRB, and adjusted later if necessary, in proportion with the AIS's size and complexity. Upon the establishment of the SRB, the ARC will also determine the lead sponsor Associate or Assistant Administrator which will select the first Chairperson for the SRB. For those AISs impacting multiple program or management functions (multiple sponsoring Associate or Assistant Administrators or Staff Assistants, in the case of RUS), the Chairpersonship will be rotated annually as determined by the SRB membership. Each SRB is responsible for evaluating and prioritizing proposed enhancements to an AIS in accordance with the overall priorities of the Strategic Business Plans and IRM Plans as determined by the ARC.

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For designated AIS development projects, the SRB is responsible for the functional review at each life cycle management milestone and for reviewing the overall management of the AIS development project. RECD Instruction 2006-T assigns specific responsibilities and duties regarding the SRB.

(c) <u>Deputy Administrator, Operations and Management</u>The Deputy Administrator, Operations and Management will:

    (1) Appoint the ARC Executive Secretary who will coordinate the activities of the ARC prescribed in {2006.1571(c) and (d) of this Instruction.

    (2) Review and approve automation initiatives (purchases of equipment, software, or services) up to $200,000 (per initiative per fiscal year not to exceed $500,000 per initiative) in purchase or contract costs.

(d) <u>Chief Information Office</u>r The Chief Information Officer will:

    (1) Provide for the planning, directing, budgeting, and coordinating of IRM activities.

    (2) Ensure that all automation initiatives are managed in accordance with sound life cycle management principles and practices and follow ARC-approved IRM plans, policies, standards, and guidelines.

    (3) Serve as the technical advisor to the ARC.

    (4) Conduct periodic reviews of IRM activities to identify opportunities for improvement, to reduce costs, to increase the usefulness of information, and, in general, further RECD mission goals and objectives.

    (5) Prepare a 3-year schedule of planned IRM reviews. See {2006.1553(d) of this Instruction.

    (6) Approve IRM Handbooks and procedures.

§2006.1567 (Con.)

(e) <u>Associate Administrators and program and management Assistant Administrators</u>
Associate Administrators and program and management Assistant Administrators within
their area of responsibility, will:

(1) Review the progress of AIS development and   enhancement projects at each
life cycle management milestone (as well as appropriate intermediate points) to
ensure the functional requirements are being satisfied in a cost-effective manner.

(2) Exercise oversight for the evaluation and improvement of functional processes as
well as the development of functional process performance measures.

(f) <u>RECD State Directors</u> RECD State Directors will exercise oversight for the
evaluation and improvement of functional processes as well as the development of
functional process performance measures, as applicable to their areas of authority.

(g) <u>The ARC Executive Secretary</u> The ARC Executive Secretary will:

(1) Ensure agenda items presented to the ARC are adequately documented, clear and
concise, and include a discussion of the benefits and costs, schedule, and business and
architectural implications of each feasible alternative.

(2) Record the minutes and votes of each ARC meeting as described in
{2006.1571(a) and (d) of this Instruction.

(3) Procedures for the ARC Executive Secretary are covered in {2006.1571(c) and
(d) of this Instruction.

§2006.1568 <u>Composition of the ARC</u> The ARC is composed of the Associate Administrators
from RUS, RHS, and RBS and other senior RECD (or other USDA) representatives, as
designated in writing by the Under Secretary for Rural Economic and Community Development.

(a) The ARC Chairperson, First Vice-Chairperson, and Second Vice-Chairperson will
rotate alphabetically on an annual basis from among the three Agency Associate
Administrators; except when there is a transition and a new appointment, then the
Associate Administrator with the longest tenure on the ARC becomes the Chair, and
thereafter the alphabetic sequence resumes. The initial Chairperson shall be the Associate
Administrator, RBS.

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The initial First Vice-Chairperson shall be the Associate Administrator, RHS. The initial Second Vice-Chairperson shall be the Associate Administrator, RUS. The Chairperson is administratively supported by the ARC Executive Secretary. In the event of a vacancy in an Associate Administrator position, the Administrator of that service may appoint any Senior Manager as a voting member. When an Associate Administrator position is filled, that person immediately becomes the voting ARC member.

(b) The Chief Information Officer will serve as nonvoting technical advisor.

(c) The ARC may add other special nonvoting members when their knowledge or skills are needed for a particular automation initiative being reviewed.

(d) The ARC will establish an advisory committee consisting of representatives of RECD employee organizations, to achieve predecisional involvement.

§§2006.1569 - 2006.1570 [Reserved]

§2006.1571 ARC procedures

 (a) Voting.

(1) Persons designated in writing as acting for an ARC member may attend and vote for the ARC member they are representing. (Persons acting for an Associate Administrator are appointed by the appropriate Agency Administrator.)

(2) An ARC quorum will consist of a simple majority of voting members. A quorum is required to conduct ARC business and actions.

(3) At least half of the members present must vote in favor of an initiative for it to be decided by the ARC or recommended to the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations and Management, RECD for approval, as appropriate. Members who abstain from voting on an initiative will not be included in the "at least half of the members present" computation.

(4) The Executive Secretary will record the votes of the ARC members on each agenda item.

§2006.1571 (Con.)

(b) Meetings

(1) The ARC should meet at least quarterly. The Executive Secretary will prepare and the ARC will approve a draft work plan, covering a 1-year period, that shows the agenda items to be considered at each quarterly ARC meeting.

(2) The ARC may meet more frequently as it deems necessary to address time-sensitive critical automation initiatives.

(3) Agenda items for consideration by the ARC will be submitted to the Executive Secretary. Any responsible RECD official may propose an agenda item for consideration.

(4) Nongovernment employees are only allowed to attend ARC meetings with the consent of the Executive Secretary.

(c) Coordination of agenda items The Executive Secretary may coordinate, when appropriate, agenda items with ARC members for comments and concurrence without convening an ARC meeting. Unanimous concurrence or nonconcurrence by the ARC members during the coordination of any agenda item will result in its approval or disapproval, as appropriate, without convening the ARC. If an agenda item is not unanimously resolved during the coordination process, the ARC will be convened to establish a position on it.

(d) Records and supporting documentation

(1) The Executive Secretary should provide the ARC, at least 2 weeks before the quarterly ARC meeting begins, a read-ahead package that contains supporting material for each ARC agenda item. The package should contain background information and other applicable supporting documentation on each ARC agenda item. The background information should normally describe the initiative under consideration and should present benefits and costs (as appropriate), schedule, technical risks, and architectural and business implications of each feasible alternative. The package should also contain a status report on active projects of all actions decided by or recommended by the ARC and approved by the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations and Management, RECD.

(2) Decisions of the ARC should be recorded and presented by the Executive Secretary to the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations and Management, RECD for action, as appropriate, within 2 weeks of the completion of the ARC meeting.

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(3) Minutes of each ARC meeting should be prepared by the Executive Secretary and coordinated with each ARC member present during the meeting for concurrence and comment. Documentation such as briefing slides and supplemental materials reviewed and/or discussed by the ARC as part of the decision-making process will be retained with the minutes.

(4) If ARC decision documents or minutes relate to funding, contracts, schedules for work that could be contracted, or similar information, the documents will be marked Procurement Sensitive.

(5) Documentation supporting deliberation of the ARC should be retained by the Executive Secretary for 5 years.

(e) <u>Independent analysis</u> The ARC may make full use of all appropriate sources and tools as needed to support its decision making process. Sources include the Department's Office of Information Resources Management, the Department's Office of Operations on procurement matters, or other Federal agency experts and independent consultants.

§§2006.1572 - 2006.1600 [Reserved]

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